



***United States Attorney
Southern District of New York***

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**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
MARVIN SMILON, HERBERT HADAD
MICHAEL KULSTAD
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600**

**GHANAIAN GRANTED ASYLUM ON FALSE FEMALE GENITAL
MUTILATION CLAIM CONVICTED ON FEDERAL FRAUD CHARGES**

JAMES B. COMEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced the conviction of REGINA NORMAN DANSON, also known as "Adelaide Abankwah" and "Kukwa Norman," on multiple counts of perjury and false statements and one count of passport fraud. The verdict, returned by a jury in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York, found DANSON guilty on all nine counts contained in the Indictment.

The evidence at the trial showed that on March 29, 1997, DANSON entered the United States and presented officials of the Immigration and Naturalization Service ("INS") with a doctored Ghanaian passport in the name of "Adelaide Abankwah." INS officials detected the fraud and informed DANSON that she was able to be excluded from the United States.

DANSON subsequently sought asylum in the United States

by falsely claiming that she would be subjected to female genital mutilation ("FGM") if she were returned to Ghana. On September 9, 1997, DANSON testified, under oath, before Immigration Judge DONN LIVINGSTON. At the hearing, DANSON made the following statements, all of which were found to be false by the jury:

1. her name was "Adelaide Abankwah;"
2. her mother had occupied the position of "Queen Mother" of her village in Ghana;
3. the traditions of her tribe required her to assume the position of Queen Mother;
4. DANSON would be forced to undergo female genital mutilation, and her lover would be killed, when tribal elders discovered that she was not a virgin; and
5. if DANSON was returned to Ghana, tribal elders would find her wherever she lived, and would bring her back to her village to face female genital mutilation or death.

Judge LIVINGSTON denied DANSON's application for asylum and the Board of Immigration Appeals ("BIA") affirmed the decision on July 30, 1998. On July 9, 1999, the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit reversed the BIA's decision, and on August 13, 1999, the BIA granted DANSON asylum.

Witnesses at trial included Nana Kwa Bonko V, the Chief of Biriwa, DANSON's village in Ghana, and Professor Patrick Odubofour Twumasi, a leader of the struggle to eradicate FGM in Ghana. Both witnesses testified that FGM is not practiced in DANSON's region of Ghana, or by her tribe, and that, contrary to DANSON's story, FGM is not used as a form of punishment.

DANSON's sentencing has been scheduled for March 26, 2003. DANSON faces a maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment, and a fine of \$250,000, for her conviction of passport fraud, and a maximum penalty of 5 years' imprisonment, and a fine of \$250,000, for each of the other eight counts of conviction.

Mr. COMEY stated that: "This defendant's lies duped the media, the courts, and public servants, and, in the process, hurt the cause of all the real victims of genital mutilation. We hope this verdict sends the message that we will not tolerate efforts by unscrupulous people to exploit a serious worldwide problem for their own benefit. I am also grateful to the INS, which absorbed the slings and arrows of much undeserved public scorn for its handling of this case."

Mr. COMEY also thanked ROSLYNN R. MAUSKOPF, the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, for the assistance of her Office. The case was prosecuted in the Eastern District of New York because the crimes of perjury, false statements and use of an altered passport were all committed in that district.

RONNIE ABRAMS and AITAN GOELMAN, who are Assistant United States Attorneys in the Southern District of New York, are in charge of the prosecution. Ms. ABRAMS and Mr. GOELMAN were appointed Special Assistant United States Attorneys in the Eastern District of New York for the purpose of prosecuting this case.

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